

## All Anglos are alike?

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**ALL ANGLOS ARE ALIKE?  
A STUDY OF WHINGING POMS AND BLOODY-MINDED AUSSIES**

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**ABSTRACT**

Cross-cultural service research is an important topic with a rich array of empirical evidence for differences in customer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. However the extant literature is almost exclusively focused on differences between cultures at each end of the diversity spectrum (most commonly East versus West). Contemporary researchers have observed that existing studies fail to acknowledge the substantially greater levels of intra-cluster variation that exist. A cultural cluster is a group of countries that reflect values, attitudes and beliefs stemming from a common cultural ancestry. This seems surprising given the anecdotal evidence and stereotypes that are portrayed in popular culture, media, and art. One area where intra-cluster variation may be evident is consumer complaint behaviour and in particular within the Anglo-cultural cluster in countries. A cultural cluster is a group of countries that reflect values, attitudes and beliefs stemming from a common cultural ancestry (Javidan and House 2002). The aim of this study is therefore to explore and elucidate the nature of differences in consumer complaint behaviour between cultures traditionally conceived and operationalized as identical. This study presents a qualitative study of 60 in-depth interviews with consumers in the United Kingdom and Australia, and identifies differences in complaining styles, parental influence, and the conceptualisation of complaining.

## **ARE ALL ANGLOS ARE ALIKE? A STUDY OF WHINGING POMS AND BLOODY-MINDED AUSSIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Typically, Britons pride themselves on their stoicism, resilience and a ‘stiff upper-lip’ (Voss et al. 2004). In the face of national adversity Britons proudly recall the ‘spirit of the Blitz’ (Hislop 2012) and while they appear happy, occasionally, to grumble about the weather, research indicates that Britons tend to avoid complaining about poor service (Institute of Customer Service, 2013). Indeed, research indicates that UK consumers commonly avoid complaining since not only are such activities potentially socially embarrassing (East 2000; de Lacey 2014), but also, largely fruitless (European Commission, 2009). In contrast, Australians are supposedly renowned for their vociferousness and their confidence in asserting their rights to a ‘fair go’ (Ashkanasy 2006; Hobbes 2013). This is reflected in the volume of complaints directed towards firms, agencies, and government bodies (Colgate and Hedge 2001; van Zanten 2005; Consumer Federation of Australia 2012). Indeed, anecdotal evidence would appear to support the view that the complaining habits of UK and Australian consumers are radically different.

However, extant literature appears to overlook such differences. This is somewhat surprising given the wealth of research on complaint behaviours, attitudes and processes (e.g., Gruber et al. 2010; Bodey and Grace 2006). In the UK studies have looked at a wide variety of issues including consumer complaint behaviour (Broadbridge and Marshall 1995), complaining intentions (East 2000), complaint-handling employee characteristics (Gruber 2011), and illegitimate complaints (Reynolds and Harris 2005). Similarly, although in greater volume, Australian studies have examined attitudes towards complaining (Ferguson and Phau 2012), characteristics of complainers and non-complainers (Bodey and Grace 2006), satisfaction with third party complaints (Russell-Bennett, Hartel and Drennan 2010), outcomes of complaining (Jones et al 2006), complaint channels (Volkov, Harker and Harker 2002), switching barriers (Patterson and Smith 2003) and complaint handling (Yuksel, Ugurk and Yuksel 2006). Therefore the

current theoretical focus in consumer complaint behaviour is on investigating the dynamics of complaining rather than identifying features within a common cultural context. Thus, there is an overemphasis on describing complaint behaviour to the detriment of developing analytical insights derived from the context. In this sense, there is a gap in extant knowledge of how the idiosyncrasies of these cultures interact with and influence complaining.

In most cross-cultural studies of service interactions, the comparison base tends to be between cultures with high levels of diverse behaviours - predominantly East versus West (see Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson 2006). Indeed researchers have investigated this with a surprisingly wide range of perspectives; service quality (Smagalla 2004), language preferences in service interactions (Holmqvist 2011), e-service quality (Jung-Hwan and Chungho 2010), consumer service shopping styles (Leo, Bennett and Hartel 2005), relationship strength (Barry, Dion and Johnson 2008), and complaint behaviour (Watkins and Liu 1996). These cross-cultural studies have seized upon Hofstede's (1980) cultural classification and compared cultures on the basis of their individualism-collectivism, femininity-masculinity, long-short power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. While this research tradition has merit, a team of world-wide researchers (GLOBE) introduced an alternative approach more than a decade ago called the GLOBE study that investigated cultural differences across 61 countries with almost 10,000 respondents (Javidan and House 2002). While the GLOBE project offers an alternative classification to Hofstede, both approaches still group countries into some form of cultural cluster with the assumption of similarity or only minor differences. This clustering leads to the misleading conclusion that cultural clusters are homogeneous and that generalisations about consumer behaviour can be made. However, contemporary researchers have observed that existing studies overemphasize cross-cultural differences and fail to acknowledge the substantially greater levels of intra-cluster variation exist (Blodgett, Hill and Bakir 2006).

The UK complaints bill is estimated to cost the country billions of pounds per year, with 2012 proving a record high for levels of UK complaints in sectors as diverse as financial services, education,

and health care (UK Financial Ombudsman Service, 2012; Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, 2012; Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2012). The social impacts of complaining are also significant in terms of staff turnover, absenteeism, and stress-related illness (Lewis and Clacker 2001; Bell and Luddington 2006). There is a plethora of complaint research that has indicated effective complaint management can increase customer satisfaction, market share, and profit. In short, the increasing trend of consumer complaining has profound and pervasive implications. However despite this evidence for the importance of managing complaints, organizations exhibit poor performance in this field of services management (Homburg and Furst 2007). In addition to known organizational barriers reasons for poor complaint handling, such as resistance or ego-defensiveness (Homburg and Furst 2007), we propose that assumptions and expectations relating to culture may be another barrier. An understanding in particular of the intra-cultural differences in complaint behaviour may assist organizations to provide better complaint handling. For example, many travellers (from Australia and elsewhere) to the UK experience dissatisfactory experiences in industries ranging from airline service to hotels (see Hickman, 2009; Brown 2012). Understanding the response of these customers may assist UK companies to better deal with non-UK customers. The aim of this study is therefore to explore and elucidate the nature and social dynamics of differences in consumer complaint behaviour between cultures traditionally conceived and operationalized as identical. In the current study, the focus of our research is on the differences within a cultural cluster. To achieve the aim we selected a cultural cluster that shares a common language and heritage but is geographically separate enough for differences to have emerged over time; the Anglo cluster with Great Britain and Australia as the two countries. As a starting point, we outline the complaint theory frameworks of Singh (1990) and Singh and Wilkes (1996) who identify types of complainers and antecedents of complaining.

## **Complaint Research**

Complaining is one of three responses to dissatisfaction: exit, voice (complaining), and loyalty (Singh 1988). Within complaint responses there are three types based on the type of recipient voice; complaints voiced direct to seller, private (complaints to friends/family, also known as negative word-of-mouth (WOM), and third party (complaints to independent organizations). Some consumers engage in one of these strategies, others combine the strategies (Singh and Wilkes 1996). There is a hierarchy with consumers typically engaging initially in private, then voice, and finally third-party if the previous two approaches have not yielded success.

Consumer complaint research has twenty-five years of evidence starting with the seminal work of Singh (1988), who empirically introduced a taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviours. Building on Hirschman's (1980) three response model to dissatisfaction (exit, voice, and loyalty), Singh (1988) conceptualized complaint responses into voice, private (word-of-mouth), and third party. Since then complaint research has identified the outcomes of complaining (Mattsson, Lemmink, and Mccoll 2004; Bearden et al., 1985), complaint channels (Mattila and Wirtz 2004), types of complaints (Singh 1988) and types of complainers (Bodey and Grace 2006). We know that complaining is influenced by individual characteristics such as demographic influences (Gronhaug and Zaltman, 1981), interpersonal influences (Yan and Lotz 2009), and personality influences (Mooradian and Olver 1997). Finally we know that consumers complain for a variety of reasons; fairness (Schmitt, Dube and Leclerc 1992; Blodgett, Wakefield and Barnes, 1995), likelihood of success (Singh 1989), cost/benefit to the consumer, (Gronhaug and Gilly 1991), fraud (Kowalski 1996), helpfulness and altruism (Halstead 2002), and revenge (Halstead 2002; Huefner and Hunt 2000).

For the purpose of this research, we draw on two existing frameworks; Singh's (1990) typology of complainers and Stephens and Gwinner (1998) motives for complaints. We use Singh's (1990) framework to identify if there are differences between the two countries in terms of

complaint style. The second framework by Stephens and Gwinner (1998) identifies emotion-focussed or problem-focussed coping as a core motivator of complaint behaviour. We use this framework to identify the efficacy of complaining styles between the two countries. In the first framework, Singh (1990) identified four types of complainers; passives, voicers, irates and activists and provided support for enduring rather than situational complaint response styles. Stephens and Gwinner (1998) undertook qualitative research with women using cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) to identify that emotional reactions tends to generate avoidance or non-complaint behaviour.

### **Cross-cultural Complaint Behaviour Research**

We know that customers in different countries and cultures differ in their complaint behaviour. Prior research has either examined complaint behaviour across countries of greatest difference e.g. East versus West (see Table 1) or within a single country e.g., India (Gera 2011), Australia (Bodey and Grace 2006), Spain (Velezquez et al. 2010), United Kingdom (Schoefer and Ennew 2005), Malaysia (Ndubishi and Ling 2006), and the US (Blodgett, Hill and Bakir 2006). When examining the studies that are conducted across countries, Hofstede's cultural difference theory (Hofstede 1980) is the most cited cultural diversity theory, with variation on cultural dimensions such as individualism/collectivism and power distance. To date, there have been no studies conducted that specifically examine countries within a common cultural cluster or background to explain consumer complaint behaviour differences.

### **INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

### **The GLOBE Cultural Framework**

Culture has been the subject of interest from philosophers and scholars alike, with the earliest known investigation by Herodotus, a 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek historian, who observed that all humans



were ethnocentric (Triandis 1980). In the late 1960s, cross-cultural psychology emerged as a distinct research field that aimed to operate in the international arena and in particular to assist economic development in developing nations (Triandis 1980). Since then, the most widely-cited theory of cultural differences is the five dimension approach of Hofstede (1980) which contains the dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1980,1997). Despite being very popular amongst business researchers and practitioners, the Hofstede approach has been highly criticized. Three common reasons are the assumption of collective exhaustiveness, the relevance of a 35 year old framework to modern nations, the lack of ability to use the measurement instrument at the individual level, and problems with reliability and validity of the measures (Smith 2006).

A more recent approach that claims to overcome many of the problems associated with the Hofstede approach is the GLOBE project, which contains cultural clusters rather than specific countries (Javidan and House 2002). A cultural cluster is a group of countries that share similar cultural characteristics. Building upon the work of both Triandis (1972) and Hofstede (1980), the GLOBE project studied sixty-one nations and developed nine cultural dimensions, grouping societies together based on their level of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, collectivism I, collectivism II, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation (Javidan and House 2002).

The GLOBE Project grouped countries in the study into ten cultural clusters based on their similarities along nine cultural dimensions. Cultural clusters allow practitioners to identify the extent, nature, and social dynamics of cultural similarities and differences across the globe (Javidan and House, 2002). While some clusters contained countries geographically close (Arab Cultures), others contained countries long distances from each other (Anglo cultures and Latin Europe). However a note of caution is required , even though the GLOBE classification addresses many of

the shortcoming of the Hofstede approach, there is still an assumption of homogeneity which may lose relevancy as countries become more multi-cultural in nature.

## **INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

### **Complaint Behaviour within the Anglo Cultural Cluster**

The lack of research into within-culture differences was first noted by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) and still remains an area needing further research (Perkins 2012). To overcome the dominance in the complaint literature of comparisons between heterogeneous cultural clusters/countries and to address the gap in the literature relating to intra-cultural cluster complaint behaviour differences, we have selected the Anglo cultural cluster, and in particular the countries of Australia and the United Kingdom. The Anglo cluster was selected due to anecdotal commentary on differences between Anglo countries such as Australia, Canada, USA, and the United Kingdom and conflicting research conducted within Anglo countries. Australia and the United Kingdom were selected as they are geographically distant countries in the Anglo group, they share a common colonial heritage and yet exhibit markedly different cultural values (see Rossiter 2007 for list of Australian values).

A leading global consulting firm (TMI) regularly conducts surveys in the USA and Australia on consumer complaint behaviour, yet surprisingly not in the UK. When referring to the British complaint culture, the ex-managing director of TMI comments that the British complaint culture is growing but still has a long way to go (Institute of Customer Service 2007). While newspapers and blogs regularly comment on the British ‘stiff upper lip’ attitudes towards complaining (see Waites 2011; Hislop 2012; de Lacey 2014), there is little empirical evidence to explain why British consumers are so reluctant to voice their dissatisfaction to service providers.

Differences in results appear when examining Anglo-specific studies relating to the motivations for complaining. In Australia for example, support was found for non-monetary redress being an

important motivation or complaint behaviour (Russell-Bennett, Hartel and Beatson 2011), while in the USA consumers were more motivated to complain when the amount at stake was high (Bearden et al. 1985). Likewise complainants to a third party differed in demographics, with Canadians being older and well-educated (Liefeld, Edgecombe and Wolfe 1975), while Americans were younger with lower incomes (Kolodinsky 1995). Australians have been found to have a highly positive attitude towards complaining (Bodey and Grace 2006; TMI-SOCAP 2005) compared to a study which found British tourists had the highest negative attitude towards complaining and highest embarrassment level in a four country-study (Yuksel, Ugurk and Yuksel, 2006).

This literature review therefore leads us to suggest that there is a need to explore the nature and social dynamics of differences within a cultural cluster to satisfy the theoretical gaps identified. Given these seemingly conflicting studies, combined with a lack of evidence examining within-cultural cluster consumer complaint behaviour, we seek to explore and elucidate the nature and social dynamics of differences in consumer complaint behaviour between cultures traditionally conceived and operationalized as identical.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

In order to explore complaining styles within a GLOBE cluster, two key study design decisions were required; (i) which GLOBE cluster to explore and (ii) which subsets within the selected GLOBE cluster to evaluate. In the first regard, the Anglo cluster was deemed an appropriate cluster to study on the grounds of global economic importance, the breadth of existing research into service within the Anglo cluster, and on pragmatic shared-language grounds. Second, in order to explore intra-cluster similarities and differences two cluster subsets were required. Ultimately, the UK and Australian intra-cluster subsets were deemed appropriate contexts for study for six main reasons; geographic separation, similar socio-political cultural traditions, a shared past history, a very broadly similar ethnic make-up, continued (albeit

distant) social links, and similar economic systems. While there is multi-culturalism in both countries, there is still a dominance of white, anglo ancestry; in the UK this is 87% and in Australia 90% of residents identify with the Anglo culture (either Australian, English, Irish or Scottish ancestry) (ABS 2012). The homogeneity of cultural values within the Anglo group created by this common ancestry has been evidenced in numerous studies with the largest and most recent one being the GLOBE project. To increase the level of homogeneity, only citizens with both parents born in the country were eligible for inclusion in the study.

Given the aim of the study is to explore widely varying human interaction and behaviours (that is, complaining) and to explore similarities and differences with subsets of a cultural cluster previously treated as homogenous, research methods with considerable flexibility and adaptability to varying contexts and cultures were needed. Accordingly, interviews were deemed the most suitable research method, as there is a need to clarify core concepts and also explore their relationships and dynamics (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The adaptable nature of in-depth interviewing also aids the discovery of what has been described as ‘real’, ‘rich’, and ‘deep’ data (Stainback and Stainback 1988). Miller (1991) argues that the adaptability and interactivity of interviews reduces the probability of misinterpretations.

In total, 60 interviews were conducted by the authors (30 in both the UK and Australia). To reduce interviewer and respondent effects, the British author undertook the majority of UK-based interviews while the Australia author undertook most of the Australian-based interviews (although both authors undertook a small number of interviews in the alternative context). The results of the different respondent-informant interviews were analysed and no significant differences encountered. Given the aim of the study, participants in the study were screened to ensure that they were born and raised in the host country and had complained (at least once) about service within the last three months. In both contexts, a broadly country-level representative sample of informants was drawn from different ages, genders, ethnicities, and occupations. The two sub-samples were designed so that no significant differences between the

demographic make-ups were present (or indeed, any significant difference in the sectors of complaining, severity of complaints or experience of complaining). Across both sub-samples, the median age was 34 with the vast majority of informants educated to at least high school standard.

Each interview lasted at least 40 minutes (the longest interview taking 137 minutes) with a mean of around 70 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. To guide the researchers a common interview guide was used that detailed the broad structure of the interview and specified general definitions (for example of different complaining styles). After each set of five interviews the researchers discussed progress and agreed minor amendments to the interview schedule. Typically, interviews began with a discussion of confidentiality issues and general demographic details (an approach used to generate trust). Thereafter, interviews progressed into more sensitive interpretations of complaining and complaint behaviour. Interviewers took extensive notes during each interview that were transcribed and coded to enable joint interview and interviewee note analysis. An assessment of the extent of theoretical saturation was undertaken every five sets of UK and Australian interviews – hence the equal number of interviews and data. Interviews were conducted concurrently in both research contexts and data collection stopped when both sets of researchers agreed that theoretical saturation had been reached at 30 interviews in each context (see Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Following the recommendations of Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1990) all interviews were transcribed in full and subsequently analysed jointly with the extensive interview notes taken by the interviewer. In order systematically to structure the analysis procedure, the detailed approach of Turner (1981) was adopted. This approach (often labelled a ‘pragmatic’ approach) entails the tentative deduction of central or pivotal concepts and constructs in order to guide ensuing inductive theory development. Within this framework, systematic coding procedures were adopted. Specifically, transcript analysis focused on open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In short, ‘open coding’ involves the line-by-line scrutiny of transcripts for the incidence of categories and the succeeding ‘deconstruction’

of data into what could be labelled ‘emerging categories’. Thereafter, ‘axial coding’ entails the critical review and re-arranging of categories and the generation of emergent subcategories with explicit linkages and relationships (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Finally, ‘selective coding’ involves two key processes; ‘integration’ and ‘theory refinement’. ‘Integration’ entails processes of iterative analyses of the developed categories and their arrangement in relation to core findings. ‘Theory refinement’ refers to the reflexive review of the internal consistency of emergent the theory and the critical evaluation of developed categories including processes of individual case validation and the incorporation of variation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). To improve the validity of the insights coding procedures were conducted independently by the two authors. This process ensured that results were independently corroborated and any significant discrepancies between coding resolved by discussion and (in one case) by third-party mediation. In general terms this approach to data analysis provides broad definitions and general boundaries of central constructs while classifying and evaluating relationships between such constructs. In this regard, this process involves both comparative methods (Martin and Turner 1986) and inductive reasoning (Lincoln and Guba 1986).

Following an established protocol to improve the validity of the insights generated, separate external and internal veracity checks were undertaken. External checks centred on four *ex post* interviews (two with informants and two with non-informants). These interviews centred on the provision of codings, draft key findings and a discussion of the accuracy and validity of the codings, findings and conclusions developed. Internal checks included a critical review of the analysis procedures (particularly coding decisions), and the extended discussion of intra-research team debateable or contentious codings with two independent researchers familiar with the contexts.

Given the nature of the study and the potentially sensitive findings (for example, in relation to fraudulent complaining), a protocol was established for data collection and reporting that maintains the anonymity of individuals, contexts and organizations. Accordingly, details such as company names,

locations and informant names have been altered and pseudonyms used throughout.

## **FINDINGS**

The analysis of interview data led to the emergence of a number of insights into the motivations, styles, nature, sources, and conceptualizations of informants' complaining behaviour. While a range of insights surfaced, these are most parsimoniously categorized under two main headings; Similarities and Differences. Accordingly, first we present findings that are concordant with the view that the two groups of Anglo informants shared similar characteristics. Second, we describe a series of insights that suggest that there are significant, profound, and in parts, somewhat puzzling differences between the two groups. To guide our discussion, Figure 1a depicts, figuratively, our first category of findings.

### **INSERT FIGURE 1a HERE**

#### **Similarities**

Figure 1a presents three main similarities that were common to both groups of informants. That is, across both Australian and British informants striking parallels emerged in the use of various complaining styles form, complaint socialization, and beliefs regarding complaining style effectiveness. The over-arching dimension that reflects these three categories is external locus of control. The plurality of complaining styles is a contingency-based approach that varies based on the external environment. Likewise the beliefs surrounding complaining efficacy stem from external sources such as evidence of how effective other people have been in complaining, cultural norms around complaining, the industry and legislative compensation requirements and access/convenience to complaint channels. Socialisation occurs with external agents shaping the behaviour in the form off rewards and punishment. Each of these three categories are now discussed in turn.

#### *Plurality of Complaining Styles*

In order to develop insights into complaining styles, informants were presented with cards describing nine literature-derived, different styles of complaining (from aggressive, to emotion-focused, to deviant complaining) and asked to explain which (if any) of these styles they had adopted in their recent complaining behaviour. Informants were also asked to describe any complaining style or approach not listed. Across both samples a consistent trend emerged that informants either deliberately employed a range of complaining styles, or in response to situational contingences found themselves altering their style of complaining. For example:

*In different situations I think I've used all of them. I think of how you read different situations and, once again, the type of thing you're complaining about. I think that it causes you to act in different ways so you kind of read the situation and say 'okay, well, it's going to work best for me' and that's the approach you take. [Australian, Female, Aged 22].*

*It depends on the situation...I would probably normally go for the one you 'let them know something has happened and wait for them to sort it out'...but I guess it depends again on the situation. [Australian, Female, Aged 35].*

This contingency-approach contrasts with the literature where a one-style-fits-all approach is dominant and where consumer segments exist that classify consumers into complainer types with single style (Naylor 2003; Jones, McCleary and Lepisto, 2008; Wysocki, Kepner and Glasser 2008). The underlying cause of informants either consciously or inadvertently adopting a range of complaining styles, appeared to be linked to both the avenue of complaining and the perceived importance of the complaint. Prior research has found the likelihood of a complaint is dependent on situational factors such as ease of access to a complaint channel, amount at stake and the severity of the problem (Richins and Verhage 1985; Hogarth, English and Sharma 2001). Thus for example, informants adopted differing styles for formal written complaints than for face-to-face 'minor' protests. Similarly both groups altered their styles to reflect the perceived importance of the complaint, often using financial metrics as a proxy for importance. For instance, one informant switched between aggressive and passive complaint behaviour according to the financial worth of the complaint:



*I wasn't one hundred per cent happy so as it was quite expensive, I thought it was good for me to get my money back... I was building myself up ready for a fight.*

And later

*If it's just two pounds (approx. \$3.40) or something I'd probably not bother.* [British, Female, Aged 40].

Interestingly, in both samples each of the nine literature-derived styles of complaining were employed by at least two respondents, with informants often employing a 'hybrid' of two or more complaining styles (for example, aggressive-problem-focused complaining wherein informants identified their desired outcome and aggressively pursued this goal). The use of a contingency complainer style suggests that consumers in both contexts share a common approach to consumerism and possibly a common approach to consumer rights. This similarity may be a result of the ubiquity of the internet and the ability to access information such as complaining processes. Certainly consumers are becoming increasingly 'savvy' about marketing (Macdonald and Uncles 2007) and this savviness may be responsible for the strategic approach that consumers are adopting in their complaining styles.

In summary, consistently across the two samples, informants embraced a wide diversity of complaining styles. Thus, while it would be misleading to suggest that the two Anglo groups shared a similar profile of complaining styles (see later) it is important to note that both groups of informants were equally diverse in the range and breadth of the complaining styles employed. Hence:

- P1.** Within cultural clusters, complainants are likely to exhibit a wide and diverse range of different complaining styles and approaches.

#### *Complaint Socialization: Source of Complaining Styles*

The second issue, which emerged consistently across the two groups of Anglos, cantered on the influences and sources of informants' preferred complaining styles. Informants in both samples recognized that their preferred style of complaining had been influenced by a range of environmental and situational contingencies. This is consistent with the notion of the informed modern consumer who has information about complaint processes at their fingertips (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004). In the samples, it was

generally accepted that governmental advice and firm-derived information strongly influenced the avenue of complaining, as well as to a limited extent, complaining style. For instance:

*I feel pretty clued up on things like the Sales of Goods Act and on consumer rights...I think people understand their rights and are more prepared to be assertive to get those rights. Organizations can make it difficult but if you're in the right, stating the facts is the best way. [British, Female, Aged 33].*

Similarly, informants acknowledged that less formal influences such as television shows had influenced their behaviour both constructively (and in some cases destructively):

*I watch all those Airport, errr Airplane shows? You know, those about easyJet [a budget airline]? I tell you what. You can learn a lot from them! A bit of exaggeration here and there – make a fuss and stuff happens. Not shouting and swearing but just pushing things a bit and you'd be amazed what you'll get! [British Male, Aged 27].*

However, while there was broad agreement that personal complaining style had been influenced by such factors, data analysis revealed that the complaining style of informants was linked consistently to the complaining style of a parent. That is, both sets of informants identified a parent whose approach and style of complaining mirrored their own. For example:

*Well, obviously, I learned to complain, if you like, if it is learning, off my Mother. I haven't just let people treat me as they wanted!! [British, Male, Aged 65]*

*Dad is fairly aggressive about things. He was not a small man so people just listened to what he said.  
And later  
Being aggressive might make you feel good at the time but I know I always feel really guilty afterward and you know I'm sure that the poor person that I've attacked doesn't feel very good either. [Australian, Female, Aged 42].*

The relationship between the complaint style of one parent and an individual's adult complaint style has not been identified previously in the complaint literature. During data collection, informants were asked to describe their own 'preferred' or 'most commonly used' complaining style toward the start of each interview. In contrast, parental complaining styles were discussed toward the end of the interviews. As such, the link between informant and parental complaining style was not directly discussed unless informants raised the link. Interestingly, very few informants recognized that their 'preferred' style

mirrored that of a parent and those that did tended to be rather shocked at the link:

*God! That's just like my Mum! I've turned into my Mother! I sound like my Mum! That's a scary thought that! I'd never thought about that – ouch!* [British, Female, Aged 28]

Therefore, while a range of potential influences on complaining style were identified; the link between parental complaining style and informant complaining style strongly supports the view that parental complaining behaviour significantly affects both complaining style and approach. The influence of parents is further discussed later in this paper. Thus:

- P2.** Within cultural clusters, complainants are likely to adopt complaining styles and approaches that imitate the complaining styles and approaches of key complaining role models during childhood.

### *Complaining Efficacy*

Finally, Figure 1a presents beliefs regarding complaining style effectiveness as similar for both the British and the Australian samples. Data analysis indicates broad agreement across the sample about which complaining styles were most likely to be perceived to lead to a successful complaint outcome. While interpretations of the nature of a 'successful' outcome of complaining ranged from financial recompense to supplier apologies, to venting, to complimentary service, informants consistently argued that certain styles of complaining were most effective (albeit, not necessarily the style most commonly adopted – see later). Typically, the most effective complaining style was argued to include a strong emphasis on 'problem-focused' complaining.

There is little research on how to make an effective complaint, but there are a plethora of websites that have a common core of advice; focus on the problem to be solved and reduce the emotion by being less aggressive and more factual (e.g. <http://www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2011/08/23/dissatisfied-customer-make-an-effective-complaint/>). The sample respondents indicated that they were aware of these two important components of an effective complaint. For instance:

*You should would sum up pretty much exactly what the problem was and what you expect.*

*It's a genuine complaint that needs to be sorted out. The focus should be on that!* [British, Male Aged 63]

*I think a soft approach gets good results. I tell them the facts, I don't tell them how to solve the problem but I tell them that 'if it can be resolved I certainly would appreciate it'. I will say to them 'look, I think you know the answer to this. I know that you can fix it for me and I certainly would appreciate it. If you can't do it, I need to speak to somebody a little higher than you that will understand and get me help'.* [Australian Female Aged 61]

Of the 60 informants, over eighty per cent variously described effective complaining styles as being, at least in part, problem focused. However, as mentioned previously, most informants argued that hybrid styles of complaining were common. This situational style differs from Singh's (1990) interpretation of complaint as enduring styles. Consequently, most informants described the *most* effective complaining style in terms of partly problem-focused and partly another style (broadly equally divided into proactive, apologetic, and emotion-focused complaining). For instance:

*The most effective form of complaining isn't just about detailing the problem; you've also got to be 'big time' assertive. Simply stating the problem allows them [the service provider] to control the outcome, to dictate! No! If you've got a problem and you know what you want, you've got to push for your solution otherwise you'll end up with a compromise.* [British, Male, aged 47]

The two samples are also consistent in identifying styles of complaining that were unlikely to lead to a successful complaint outcome. That is, informants broadly agreed which style of complaining was least likely to work. First informants argued that assertive complaining on its own was often counterproductive:

*Well, being assertive sort of doesn't get you anywhere. You know that people are just going to turn their back or things like that!* [Australian, Female, Aged 51]

Second, both samples consistently observed that aggressive complaining styles were inappropriate in most situations and most likely to contribute to complaint failure and other undesirable complaint outcomes. For instance:

*Letting them know how angry I am, I just don't see that as being helpful. I see that as putting barriers between me and the person that I want to fix things!* [Australian, Female, Aged 23]

*My brother is very aggressive in those kinds of situations, he doesn't get results. All he gets is annoyed people and embarrassed friends!* [British, Female, Aged 34]

Interestingly, while there is a lack of research about whether aggressive complaining is more or less effective than other complaint forms, customers who use aggressive complaints are more loyal and spend more money than passive complainers (Bennett 1997). This outcome is explained by the venting process or cathartic effective of aggression. The issue of aggressive complaining styles is further discussed later in this paper.

Overall, these findings strongly suggest that both Australian and British informants share a common interpretation of complaining style effectiveness. Consistently, informants identified or described problem-focused styles as the most effective and more assertive or aggressive as less effective. In this regard, a shared cultural 'Anglo' complaining mind-set seems probable. Therefore:

- P3.** Within cultural clusters, complainants are likely to exhibit a similar perspectives regarding particular complaining styles' efficacy

## **Differences**

Although data analysis revealed a number of notable similarities across the two samples, as mentioned earlier, fundamental differences also emerged. Figure 1b presents three key differences between the two samples that, in part, challenge, or, in many regards, contextualize, the previously discussed similarities. The over-arching dimension that reflects these six categories is an internal locus of control. The use of a specific complaining style in a particular context appears to depend on internalised values of social etiquette, communication and personal expression. Similarly, the effectiveness of complaining as either venting or problem-oriented may reflect the emotional expression, negotiation and conflict resolution ability of consumers. Finally the gendered nature of the complaint socialization reflects an internal preference for influence of a parental role-model. These differences and their intra-cultural representation will now be discussed.

## INSERT FIGURE 1b HERE

### *Plurality of Styles: Most Common Complaining Styles*

While both the Australian and the British samples exhibited a broad range of complaining styles, from deviant to passive (see Figure 1a), data analysis indicates that both samples tended disproportionately to favour differing styles. In the British sample, concordant with the ‘stereotype’ of British behaviour, the majority of informants contended that their own most common style of complaining was apologetic in nature and very similar to Singh’s (1990) passive type of complainer. Typically, Britons pride themselves on their stoicism, resilience and a ‘stiff upper-lip’ (Voss et al. 2004) and this appears to translate into their complaint behaviour. This was in contrast with the British sample’s broad agreement that the other (problem-focused) style was more effective, these informants consistently identified an apologetic style as their most common style of complaining. For example:

*I always start with ‘I’m really sorry’. I don’t like making a fuss!* [British, Female, Aged 28]

*Oh, I think complaining is important, you should always complain if things aren’t right!  
But later...*

*I always end up being the one saying ‘sorry’ – even if they [the service provider] are completely wrong!* [British, Male, 35]

*If they ask me a question, I will say ‘I’m sorry for bothering you, etcetera’. That’s just my personality, my character. I wouldn’t want to upset them!* [British, Male, Aged 42]

Although a number of the older British informants argued that apologetic styles of complaining were becoming less common than they used to be (largely due to 1970s consumerism and improved consumer rights), the majority of the British sample accepted that they found complaining ‘difficult’, ‘embarrassing’, or ‘uncomfortable’. For example:

*The British are genetically allergic to complaining. We do it badly, get embarrassed about doing it badly, stutter, blush, apologize and then run. Can you imagine an American getting embarrassed about being right?* [British, Male, Aged 65]

Indeed, the entire British sample expressed some form of psychological discomfort on witnessing others

complain (most often their parents). This contrasts to the Australian sample and may suggest that context is linked to levels of public self-consciousness (the extent to which consumers' are focused on how others perceive their actions). In this sense, the current study strongly suggests that Britons have more developed public self-consciousness than Australians.

In contrast, Australian informants comparatively rarely adopted an apologetic style and followed a style consistent with Singh's (1990) voicer or activist types. Again, while acknowledging that other styles were often more effective, Australian informants consistently described their most commonly adopted style in terms that ranged between aggressive and assertive. For instance:

*I believe that being forceful when complaining is the most effective. Yeah, I do find myself using a different tone of voice. You know, getting more forceful in my voice tone. I make them understand how annoyed or upset I am. If you talk to them in a normal pleasant voice I think that they will not take much notice! [Australian, Female, Aged 42].*

*I believe that being forceful when complaining is effective because I think you need to be halfway been forceful and assertive. [Australian, Female, Aged 58]*

*I don't want be angry with them...and create conflict...but you get all upset...then I get angrier as I progress. [Australian, Female, Aged 35]*

While the research team coded such incidents as examples of an aggressive or assertive style of complaining, Australian informants tended to avoid such terms and labels, often arguing that such styles were inappropriate and frequently denying their use. So although Australians appeared more commonly to adopt aggressive or assertive styles, they rarely interpreted their action in these terms, more often describing their behaviour as 'resolution-focused' or merely 'forceful' in tone. This more positive perception of behaviours that the British would describe as aggressive allows Australians to be comfortable with engaging in the behaviour. The desire of Australians to 'speak their mind' is consistent with common Australian values such as a 'fair go' and 'defiance/rebellion' (Rossiter 2007). This leads to:

- P4.** Within cultural clusters, while complainants are likely to exhibit a wide and diverse range of different complaining styles and approaches, different subsets of each cluster are likely to favour different styles and approaches.

### *Complaint Socialization: Parental Influence*

As mentioned earlier, consistently across both samples, informants argued that the greatest influence on their complaining behaviours and styles was parental behaviour. Parents play an important role in socialization of consumers through modelling behaviour, providing advice and supervision of consumption opportunities (Neeley 2005). Typically research has investigated this socialization process in products such as grocery products (Minahan and Huddleston 2010), alcohol and finance (Kirkcaldy, Furnham and Terence 2003), however there is little research on the role of parents in influencing consumer process such as complaints. Furthermore, differences emerged between the samples with regard to the nature of parental influence. During data collection, informants were asked to describe a 'recent incident of complaining' and later in the interview to outline the complaining behaviours, approaches, and styles of their parents. The complaining styles of informants and their parents were coded separately by two teams of researchers and finally classified into either one of the nine literature-derived complaining styles (or a hybrid, mixed form such as aggressive-problem focused). Resulting analysis revealed that for the Australian sample, 80% of informants exhibited a complaining style that either directly mirrored or was analogous to the style of their father (or father figure). For example:

*I was angry because they wasted my time...yeah, just really, really angry, frustrated.*

*And later*

*My Dad is the best complainer. He gets things done...I think he must intimidate people into getting what he wants. [Australian, Female, Aged 21].*

*If I'm complaining about them, it's, like, their problem to figure out a way to make us happy.*

*If they don't, obviously, I'll take things into my own hands.*

*And later*

*Dad is the best complainer because he'll push the issue until he gets what he wants.*

*[Australian, Male, Aged 35].*

This strongly suggests that Australian consumers adopt complaining styles that reflect the complaining styles of their fathers (or father figures) suggesting that childhood or developmental experiences of paternal complaining behaviour influence consumers' subsequent consumer behaviour.



However, an identical analysis of the British sample finds diametrically opposed results. In the British sample, over 76% of those interviewed exhibited a style of complaining that mirrored or was akin to their mother's (or mother figure's) style of complaining. For example:

*I don't like confrontation and I don't like upsetting people and I don't want to tell people that they've done something wrong! If I complain to a company, I'm what you could call a 'passive, apologetic, typical Brit – don't want to make a fuss, avoid confrontation type person'!*

And later

*My Mum simply will not confront. It's not her way. I've not once seen her make a complaint to a firm about service or products or anything! She'll just wait for them to sort it out, or not! Then she'll tell the whole world not to go there!* [British, Female, Aged 27]

*I always try and be polite; I'm never rude or aggressive. I just tell them 'here's the problem', 'here's what you can do', and 'here's how to do it'. If they've messed up, all they want to do is put it right – you just need to tell them how and most of them will just do it.*

And later

*Oh, Mum would always sort things out – tell 'em straight. Getting it sorted.* [British, Male, Aged 54]

Thus, in the UK it would appear that consumers follow the complaining style of their mother (or mother figure) while Australians follow that of their father (or father figure). This may be the result of a comparatively strong matriarchal theme in British society where there is a woman as the resident head of state, where the country is often referred to as Mother England and visually represented by Britannia (a female personification of the island) (see Goettner-Abendroth 2009). Australia is a country founded predominantly by males, most of which were convicts (Ashkanasy 2007). Interestingly, in the Australian sample, informants believed their father to be an effective complainer (although, frequently, recalling somewhat embarrassing memories of their father's complaining behaviour). For example:

*Sometimes if it's...umm...only a small amount of money then its quite embarrassing to hear my Dad make such a big complaint over something that I wouldn't necessarily think was worth it....but my Dad is the best complainer because he definitely gets a response.* [Australian, Female, Aged 22]

However, British informants commonly argued that their mother was an ineffectual complainer when complaining directly to organizations. For instance:

*She just can't do it! She starts off saying 'sorry' then moves to passive-diffident and finishes up apologising for wasting their time and offering to pay them compensation! A disaster!*  
[British, Male, Aged 23]

In summary, this study finds that while parents appear strongly to influence the complaining behaviours of their children (either consciously or unconsciously), the influence of parents varies. In the UK, mothers appear to exert a stronger influence, while in Australia, fathers appear a stronger stimulus. Consequently:

- P5.** While within cultural clusters, complainants are likely to adopt complaining styles and approaches that imitate the complaining styles and approaches of key complaining role models during childhood, different subset of clusters are likely to favour different role models.

#### *Conceptualization of Complaining Efficacy: Fixing versus Venting*

The final key difference that emerged during data analysis (see Figure 1b) cantered on informants conceptualization of 'complaining'. In the Australian sample, 'complaining' was conceived as an activity directed toward organizations (or various types) explicitly directed toward the rectification of an unfairness or inequity. For example:

*Are Australians good at complaining? Yeah, I suppose so. They get the issue resolved quickly and I supposed that's the way I see it as well. So, in that respect, yeah. I'd that they generally complain as soon as they figure out that something has gone wrong. I do like to get things out of the way quickly.* [Australian, Male, Aged 21].

*Australians are good at getting their view across and ummm getting the problem fixed.*  
[Australian, Female, Aged 19]

In this sense, Australians viewed 'complaining' as an activity consciously undertaken to solve a problem (often perceived injustice) that an organization, firm, or individual had deliberately or unintentionally caused. This is consistent with the notion that complaints arise from a breach of justice (Schmitt, Dube and Leclerc, 1992; Schoefer and Ennew 2005) and with the problem-focussed coping approach to complaints (Stephens and Gwinner 1998).

However, informants from the British sample defined and conceptualized 'complaining' in a very

different way. While Australian informants saw ‘complaining’ as automatically directed toward organizations, British informants typically held a much broader view of ‘complaining’ that encompassed venting or sharing discussions with friends, family, or acquaintances. For instance:

*For me, ‘complaining’ is about letting people know that something isn’t what you’d expect; something isn’t ‘up-to-scratch’. Last week, me and the missus had a terrible meal at Roxy’s; and the bill! Well! You would believe what they charged us! I’ve complained to everyone I know that it’s a huge rip-off!* [British, Male, Aged 47]

*‘Complaining’ to me is a, well, it’s telling people that something isn’t right. Umm. I mean, telling your friends that ‘this place is no good’ or talking to your Mum about this shop or that shop. It’s getting things ‘off-your-chest’!* [British, Female, Aged 31]

Thus, ‘complaining’ was conceived by British informants to be equally a behaviour that was social as it was resolution oriented. This is consistent with Kowalski’s (1996 p. 180) definition of complaining as “an expression of dissatisfaction for the purpose of venting emotions or achieving intrapsychic goals, interpersonal goals or both.” British informants commonly described incidents of complaining where no contact was made with the triggering organizations but numerous ‘complaints’ were made to friends and family. In this sense, ‘complaining’ for British informants was as much a venting exercise as it was a process where their problems with organizations could be addressed. This style can be classified as emotion-focussed coping which has been associated with non-complaint behaviour resulting from dissatisfaction (Stephens and Gwinner 1998).

In many regards, this finding reflects the common cultural stereotypes of both cultures. Australian informants typically described the British as ‘whinging Poms’ [Various Australian Informants]; referring to a perception that Britons ‘moan’ about most things. Given the findings of the current study, it would appear that the ‘venting’ and ‘helpful sharing’ of Britons is viewed negatively by problem solving Australians who construe ‘sharing’ as unhelpful ‘whinging’. In contrast, the direct, plain-speaking, firm-oriented complaining behaviour of Australians is view as

ranging from ‘blunt’ to ‘downright rude’ [various British informants] by the less direct British who appear somewhat perplexed by the forceful, non-sharing, problem-focused Australians. Hence:

- P6.** While within cultural clusters, complainants are likely to exhibit similar perspectives regarding particular complaining styles’ efficacy, different subset of clusters are likely to hold differing views regarding complaint style efficacy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The study of British and Australian customer complaining styles led to the identification of a number of comparable and contrasting elements in the complaining conceptions, styles, and approaches of customers within the Anglo GLOBE cluster. The remainder of this paper is devoted to a discussion of the implications of these insights for both theory and practice, tempered by the limitations of the research approach, which in turn, suggests potentially fruitful avenues for later research.

The first contribution of the study centres on the finding of both common trends *and* subtle differences between the two samples studied. The aim of this study is therefore to explore and elucidate the nature and social dynamics of differences in consumer complaint behaviour between cultures traditionally conceived and operationalized as identical. The study of two subsets within the Anglo GLOBE cluster found empirical evidence that supports the notion that within clusters consumers exhibit similar complaint behaviours (see Figure 1a). However, evidence also emerged that subtle but significant differences between the two samples were also present (see Figure 1b). In this regard, the current study supports the over-arching GLOBE framework but highlights that the framework should *not* be interpreted or employed to denote homogeneity within clusters, but rather heterogeneity between clusters and elements of both similarity and difference within clusters. In this sense, the current study supports the view that the GLOBE framework must be employed and interpreted judiciously as a general framework rather than a definitive categorisation of difference (between clusters) and similarities (within clusters). While the architects of the GLOBE framework are clear regarding the generalizability of their research, subsequent

researchers have too often over-generalized the framework and lackadaisically categorized clusters as single entities rather than complex, dynamic and contrasting contexts.

This study also contributes insights into the foundations for the sociological stereotypes of ‘whinging Poms’ and ‘bloody-minded Aussies’. In the current study, both samples hold negative stereotypes of the other sample. Australians frequently express their frustration of British complaining behaviour that they pejoratively describe as ‘whinging’, while the mild-mannered British express their disdain of the pugilistically-inclined ‘bloody-minded’ Australians. Ethically both stereotypes are questionable. However, sociologically, this study finds evidence that both are founded in subjective interpretations and differing conceptions of core concepts. British complainers tend to vent their frustrations through widely distributed (and arguably, untargeted) voiced complaints designed to share frustrations or inform audiences. This behaviour is viewed by Australian audiences as passive whining and whinging rather than the venting/educating complaining intended by the British sender. In contrast, the action-oriented, problem-solving vocal complaints of Australians are viewed by the British as unnecessarily aggressive and confrontational rather than the intended problem-solving and practical solution. In this way, the stereotypes of both samples are founded in their differing conceptions of the concept of complaining, leading to skewed interpretations of the complaining behaviour of customers with differing conceptions of complaining. In terms of theory, these findings provide insight into the derivations, nature, and social-dynamics of stereotyping and thus sources of potential discrimination and cultural misunderstanding. A notable issue here is that, in the current study, the significant differences in the interpretation of complaining (a basic service concept) emerged in an intra-cluster analysis. Given this, differences between clusters must be truly profound. A contribution to the advancement of consumer complaint theory is the notion that a relatively homogenous culture, such as the Anglo culture, can influence complaint behaviour through external and internal locus of control. Further research is needed that examines how this occurs within a common cluster and the implications of this for complaint theory.

An unexpected finding that arose out of the study was the role of the parents in shaping the complaining style of the consumer. There is a notable absence in the consumer complaints literature about the socialisation of complaint behaviour and the role that parents play in this process. Socialisation theory indicates that children learn from their parents by observation, parental provision to access learning opportunities and skill development (Neeley 2005). Learning by observation is a low-involvement process whereby consumers may be unaware of the information and knowledge they are gaining. This certainly seemed to be the case in this study where respondents expressed surprise as they realized they were modelling their parent's complaining style.

Finally, this study offers practical implications for service managers in the areas of training and recruitment of complaint handlers and complaint management. Cross-cultural awareness is an important attribute of service providers who increasingly engage with consumers from different cultural backgrounds. However it is probable that when cross-cultural differences and sensitivity is discussed through training and in the recruitment of staff, that emphasis is placed on cultures of maximum diversity (e.g., East versus West) rather than within a cultural cluster. Given that this study has identified key differences between Australians and British consumers, cross-cultural training needs to be extended to intra-cluster. In terms of service management, the process for eliciting complaints needs to take into account the different styles of consumers and perhaps even use terminology outside the field of complaints. Complaints are a valuable source of information about the effectiveness of a service system and provide ideas for improvements; they therefore need to be encouraged. If British consumers view the term 'complaint' as negative or aggressive then the softer term of 'feedback' may encourage them to complain.

While the current study generates a number of contributions and implications, these should be tempered by the limitations of the research design and methodology. These, combined with the developed propositional inventory, form the basis for a number of suggestions for future research. First, our focus

was on exploring differences and similarities between two subsets of a single GLOBE cluster. As such, although empirical generalizability is not intended or claimed, theoretical generalizability seems probable, but should be subjected to further study. Thus additional research that explores and describes intra-cluster differences in a number of different clusters would be insightful. Further, while our focus was on complaining behaviour, it seems likely that additional service concepts will compare, differ and contrast in similar ways. A good example of this could be differences between the pay structures and differentials between differing contexts. In these regards, future studies could broaden the focus of analysis. Certain findings also merit future study. In particular, the differences in the role of parents are significant but perplexing. In this sense, further research is needed to elucidate the learning behaviour and social dynamics of complaining.

The countries selected within this study did not represent the full range diversity within the Anglo cluster. Future research could examine consumers from other Anglo cultures such as Canada, the United States, or New Zealand. Examination of consumer complaint styles within other cultural clusters such as South-East Asia would also prove useful and help overcome the stereotype that all consumers within the grouping are the same. Research has already identified many differences in emotional display rules for consumers in Asian cultures (Elfenbein and Ambady 2002; 2003), so it is likely that there would be differences in consumer complaint styles.

The research was designed to generate a number of contributions for theorists, practitioners and, policy makers. Although numerous implications emerge, for reasons of parsimony, three main intended contributions are highlighted: cost reductions and economic benefits, cultural overlap, and government policy.

1. In generating a greater understanding of the social dynamics of complaining and complaint resolution, theoretical understanding is advanced and practical insights into cost reductions and economic benefits increased;

2. The critical evaluation of the differences between the UK and Australian cultures should provide insights into cultural overlap and inconsistencies, supplying a theoretical and practical basis for cross-cultural societal understanding, and;
3. Providing insights into complaining behaviours that can inform government policies relating to fair trading, appropriate compensation and recourse for consumers, and regulation of business practices.



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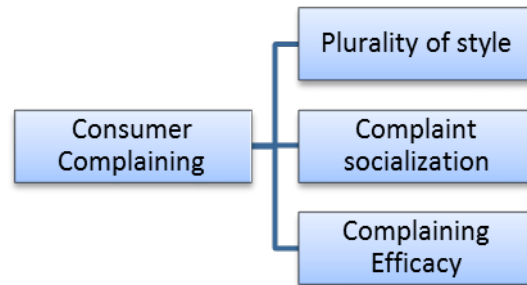
**Table 1: Illustrative Cross-Cultural Complaint Studies**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Cultures</b>	<b>Complaint Behaviors</b>	<b>Product category</b>
Ferguson and Phau 2012	Australia vs Indonesia	Attitudes towards complaining, complaint behavior	Education
Ngai et al 2007	Asian (China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Taiwan) and Non-Asian	Public complaints, private complaints and no complaint behavior.	Hotels
Liu and McClure 2001	South Korea and USA	Voice and private complaint behavior, complaining intentions	Various
Au, Hui and Leung 2001	China and Canada	Complaint behavior, attribution and justice and post-complaint behavior	Hotel
Blodgett, Hill and Bakir 2006	Liberal countries, narrow policy countries, no policy countries.	Redress policies of different countries/political systems.	Various
Audrain-Pontivia and Kimmel 2008	France and America	Negative word-of-mouth and redress strategies	Various consumer goods
Ekiz and Au 2011	China and USA	Attitudes towards complaining and intentions to be loyal	Hotels
Hernandez et al. 1991	USA and Puerto Rico	Perceptual and attitudinal antecedents to complaining, propensity to complain, and public versus private actions.	VCR recorders
Yuksel, Ugurk and Yuksel 2006	Turkey, Netherlands, Britain and Israel	Attitudes towards complaining	Hotels
Fernandes and Santos 2007	Brazil and USA	Complaint intentions	Restaurants

**Table 2: GLOBE Cultural Clusters**

<b>Anglo</b> UK Australia South Africa (white) Canada New Zealand Ireland USA	<b>Eastern Europe</b> Hungary Russia Albania Poland Greece Slovenia Georgia	<b>Southern Asia</b> India Indonesia Philippines Malaysia Thailand Iran
<b>Latin Europe</b> Israel Italy Portugal Spain France Switzerland (French speaking)	<b>Latin America</b> Costa Rica Venezuela Ecuador Mexico San Salvador Colombia Guatemala Bolivia Brazil Argentina	<b>Confucian Asia</b> Taiwan Singapore Hong Kong South Korea China Japan
<b>Nordic Europe</b> Finland Sweden Denmark	<b>Sub-Sahara Africa</b> Namibia Zambia Zimbabwe South Africa (black) Nigeria	
<b>Germanic Europe</b> Austria Switzerland The Netherlands Germany (East and West)	<b>Arab</b> Qatar Morocco Turkey Egypt Kuwait	



**Figure 1a****Figure 1b**